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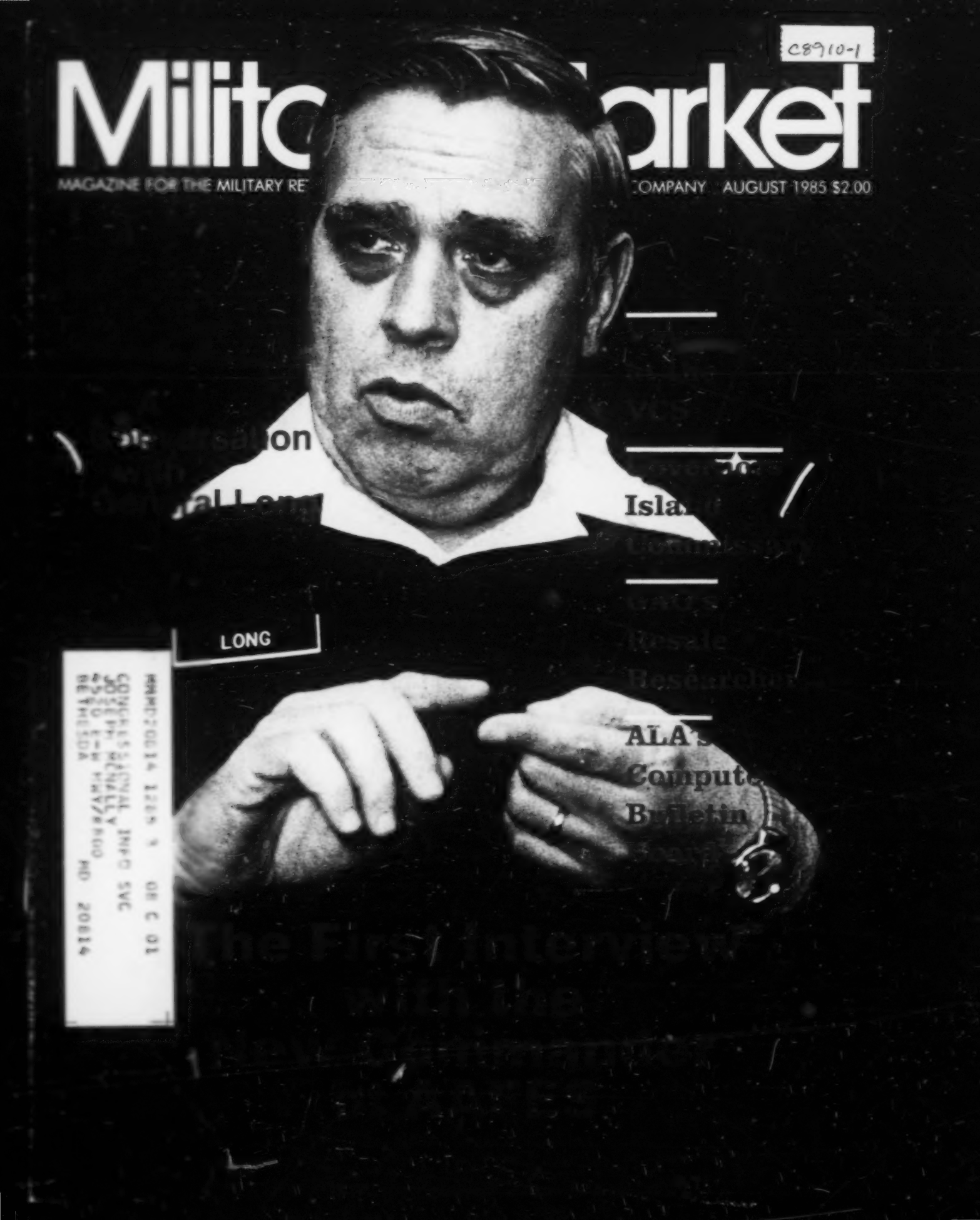

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Military Market survey

Commissary Resets:

Blackmail For A Cheap Source of Free Labor?

NOBODY LOVES A RESET, but most brokers have resigned themselves to accepting them as a necessary evil and a condition of doing business with the commissaries.

But that doesn't mean they like them. Hardly. For this month's survey, 34 respondents sounded off about the pressures on them to perform resets for commissaries — pressures from the systems, their employers and their own families.

Said one, "I've been told that if I don't come in on my weekend and perform this reset for the commissary, that my product will lose shelf space to my competitors. Now, if that isn't blackmail, what is it?"

Another broker said, "The systems have found a way to get free labor through blackmail."

Eight respondents said they had done 20 or more resets so far this year, and another 15 said they have done between one and five. Having to do resets of resets is a variation on the basic problem, and one broker said he'd performed five resets so far this year — on only two stores!

Twenty vendors experienced the humiliation of finding themselves locked inside a commissary, preventing them from leaving during a reset. Said one, "The commissary officer thought too many people were sneaking out at 10:45 p.m., when the reset was supposed to be over by 11, so he locked us in. We had been there since 4 p.m. of that day . . . a Sunday."

Vendors also don't like having to pay to feed themselves while doing what amounts to free labor for the stores. Twenty-four respondents said they were required to contribute money for snacks and beverages during the course of resets.

Twenty-four vendors said they had spent two or more consecutive weekends doing resets. Complained one, "When you work between 50 and 60 hours a week, with all sorts of travel, the weekends I can spend alone with my family are like gold. Two consecutive weekends is too much to ask."

Vendors also complain about having to set not only their own products, but often those of their competitors, too. Janitorial jobs such as assembling shelving and mopping floors were the norm. All 34 brokers said they had been required to do such tasks.

While some favor doing one reset per month, or doing resets by product categories, the weekend scheduling of resets was the most distasteful aspect of resets for most vendors.

So how can the problem of scheduling be solved? About two thirds of our respondents (22 of 34) voted to conduct resets on Mondays and Tuesdays, rather than solely on weekends. Said one, "The seven-day workweek was outlawed years ago."

When it comes to pointing fingers at the systems for conducting bad resets, the Army was fingered as No. 1 culprit by 31 of 34 respondents, frequently citing a lack of organization and planning on the part of TSA.

Unfortunately, respondents are dubious about the value of resets. Said one, "The thing that really bugs me about them is that the reset doesn't hold after you've done it. I've gone back into a store a month after the reset and everything had been changed. It really made me feel like my work had [not] been appreciated."

However, brokers agree that resets can serve a useful purpose, allowing them to re-allocate shelf space according to established planograms or their products' share of market. And, as one sarcastically noted, "It's the only time when I seem to be able to get new products introduced into the system."

But they feel strongly about actually stocking the shelves during a reset. Said one, "When you look at the word reset, it says exactly what industry should do — reset the items on the shelf and then leave. Let the regular store employees restock the shelves. That shouldn't be our job."

A final annoyance is that vendors feel their efforts are often unappreciated. Said one, "It would be nice to get a thank-you card, or at the very least, for store personnel to make you feel as if giving up your weekends for them was worthwhile." **MM**

1. HOW MANY RESETS HAVE YOU OR YOUR EMPLOYEES PARTICIPATED IN SO FAR THIS YEAR? 1-5 — 15. 6-10 — 5. 11-15 — 3. 16-20 — 3. More than 20 — 8.

2. HAVE YOU OR YOUR STAFF EVER BEEN LOCKED INSIDE A STORE DURING A RESET? Yes — 20. No — 13. Don't Know — 1. **. . . BEEN REQUIRED TO CONTRIBUTE MONEY FOR SNACKS AND BEVERAGES DURING A RESET?** Yes — 23. No — 9. Don't know — 2. **. . . SPENT TWO OR MORE CONSECUTIVE WEEKENDS DOING RESETS?** Yes — 24. No — 10. **. . . BEEN REQUIRED TO SET PRODUCTS THAT YOUR COMPANY DOES NOT REPRESENT?** Yes — 29. No — 5. **. . . BEEN REQUIRED TO MOP FLOORS, ASSEMBLE SHELVING, OR DO OTHER JANITORIAL CHORES?** Yes — 34. No — 0.

3. BECAUSE RESETS TAKE AWAY MUCH OF A SALESPERSON'S PERSONAL TIME ON WEEKENDS, SOME ALTERNATIVES HAVE BEEN PROPOSED. WHICH WOULD YOU PREFER? DO ONE RESET PER STATE PER MONTH (OR PER REGION, IN LARGE STATES) — 4. **RESET A STORE IN SECTIONS OVER THREE CONSECUTIVE MONDAYS** — 4. **CONDUCT RESETS ON MONDAYS AND TUESDAYS** — 22. **DO MINI-RESETS (1-3 SECTIONS PER STORE, FOLLOWING CATEGORY REVIEWS)** — 0. **STICK WITH THE CURRENT PROCEDURES** — 4.

4. THE SERVICES ARE RESETTING STORES TO IMPROVE THE WAY PRODUCTS ARE MERCHANDISED AND DISPLAYED. ONCE A STORE HAS BEEN RESET, HAVE YOU SEEN AN INCREASE IN THE SALES OF THE PRODUCTS YOUR FIRM REPRESENTS? Yes — 15. No — 3. Sometimes — 16.

5. DO YOU THINK THE SERVICES ARE DISORGANIZED IN THE WAY THEY CONDUCT RESETS? Yes — 31. No — 2. Don't know — 1. **WHICH SYSTEM IS THE MOST DISORGANIZED?** Army — 31. Navy — 1. Air Force — 2. Marines — 0.

6. THE AMERICAN LOGISTICS ASSOCIATION HAS PROPOSED THE USE OF AN ELECTRONIC BULLETIN BOARD TO MONITOR AND COORDINATE RESET SCHEDULES. WHEN IT'S ON-LINE, WILL YOUR FIRM MAKE USE OF THIS BULLETIN BOARD? Yes — 16. No — 9. Don't know — 9. **DO YOU THINK USING IT WILL HELP SOLVE RESET SCHEDULING PROBLEMS?** Yes — 8. No — 18. Don't know — 8.

7. WHAT'S THE BEST THING YOU CAN SAY ABOUT RESETS? (See story)

8. WHAT'S THE WORST THING? (See story)

9. HOW DOES YOUR FAMILY FEEL ABOUT RESETS? (See story)

10. HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE THE WAY RESETS ARE CONDUCTED? (See story)

Military Market index

		APRIL			YEAR-TO-DATE		
Commissaries		CY'95	CY'94	%	CY'95	CY'94	%
Air Force	CONUS	$146,832	$139,881	4.97	$596,059	$592,780	0.55
	OVERSEAS	28,814	27,976	3.00	118,956	116,077	2.48
	TOTAL	175,646	167,857	4.64	715,015	708,857	0.87
Army	CONUS	102,795	99,015	3.82	417,480	412,230	1.27
	OVERSEAS	29,715	31,605	-5.98	123,165	129,150	-4.63
	TOTAL	132,510	130,620	1.45	540,645	541,380	-0.14
Navy	CONUS	57,318	55,601	3.09	248,661	236,978	4.93
	OVERSEAS	6,354	6,406	-0.81	27,544	27,529	0.05
	TOTAL	63,672	62,007	2.69	276,205	264,507	4.42
Marines	CONUS	13,562	12,169	11.45	55,714	51,041	9.16
	OVERSEAS	239	196	21.94	934	752	24.20
	TOTAL	13,801	12,365	11.61	56,648	51,793	9.37
Coast Guard	CONUS	202	217	-6.91	1,069	941	13.60
	OVERSEAS	313	336	-6.85	1,183	1,095	8.04
	TOTAL	515	553	-6.87	2,252	2,036	10.61
All Commissaries	CONUS	$320,709	$306,883	4.51	$1,318,983	$1,293,970	1.93
	OVERSEAS	$65,435	$66,519	-1.63	$271,782	$274,603	-1.03
	TOTAL	$386,144	$373,402	3.41	$1,590,765	$1,568,573	1.41
Grocery Stores	U.S.[1]	$21,677	$20,076	4.99	$83,236	$79,934	4.13
Exchanges							
AAFES	CONUS	$244,915	$235,807	3.86	$872,717	$862,652	1.17
	OVERSEAS	159,983	165,239	-3.18	588,393	604,247	-2.62
	TOTAL	404,898	401,046	0.96	1,461,110	1,466,899	-0.39
Navy	CONUS[2]	93,611	94,247	-0.67	326,072	321,857	1.31
	OVERSEAS[2]	39,141	38,643	1.29	137,979	136,642	0.98
	TOTAL[2]	132,752	132,890	-0.10	464,051	458,499	1.21
Marines	CONUS	29,288	27,782	5.42	107,802	105,086	2.39
	OVERSEAS	5,086	5,091	-0.10	18,672	18,502	0.92
	TOTAL	34,374	32,873	4.57	126,274	123,588	2.17
Coast Guard	CONUS[3]	6,872	6,490	5.89	24,788	23,225	6.73
	OVERSEAS[3]	540	813	-33.58	1,969	2,892	-31.92
	TOTAL[3]	7,412	7,303	1.49	26,757	26,117	2.45
Mail Order	CONUS[4]	1,066	1,218	-12.48	4,736	5,724	-17.26
	OVERSEAS[4]	1,046	3,515	-70.24	11,388	15,604	-27.02
	TOTAL[4]	2,112	4,733	-55.38	16,124	21,328	-24.40
All Exchanges	CONUS	$375,752	$365,544	2.79	$1,335,915	$1,318,544	1.32
	OVERSEAS	$205,796	$213,301	-3.52	$758,401	$777,887	-2.50
	TOTAL	$581,548	$578,845	0.47	$2,094,316	$2,096,431	0.10
Department Stores	U.S.[1]	$10,414	$9,581	7.57	$35,948	$33,640	6.56

1) SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2) Does not include sales of ships stores. 3) MM estimate, based on official data. 4) Includes consolidated sales for all services, including Coast Guard.

Individual figures may not add to totals because of rounding. All sales are expressed in millions (add 000), except grocery stores and department stores, which are in billions. Commissary sales include appropriate surcharges, and exchange sales include concession returns.